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TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [KTIP](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [USAID](#) [PO](#)
SUBJECT: PORTUGAL: INFORMATION ON CHILD LABOR AND FORCED
LABOR IN THE PRODUCTION OF GOODS

REF: A. 09 STATE 131997
[1](#)B. 08 LISBON 1324

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[1](#)1. Per Ref A, Poleconoff contacted the Portuguese Ministry of Labor, the International Labor Organization (ILO), and local NGOs to obtain current information on the use of forced labor and exploitative child labor in the production of goods in Portugal.

[1](#)2. According to Fatima Matos, Coordinator of the Program for Inclusion and Citizenship (PIEC) in the Ministry of Labor, there is very little evidence of forced labor or exploitative child labor in the production of goods. She acknowledged, however, that some Roma are using their minor children as street beggars and that undocumented African minors could also be working illegally. Local NGOs -- the Institute of Support to Children and the National Confederation of Action on Child Labor -- and the ILO Portugal office all agreed that child labor and forced labor in the production of goods were no longer problems in Portugal. ILO/Portugal child labor expert Sofia Amaral de Oliveira noted, however, the increasing use of children in the Portuguese entertainment industry, particularly in soap operas and commercials.

[1](#)3. Background: In 1998, an international NGO estimated that there were 200,000 minors working in Portugal, an inflated estimate according to PIEC Coordinator Matos. The government disagreed with the figure but acknowledged the problem of child labor and the need to address it. In 1998, it conducted a nationwide survey, in accordance with ILO methodology, among families with school-age children to assess the extent and nature of the problem; developed the Plan for the Elimination of Exploitation of Child Labor (PEETI); and revised labor laws on child workers. The Ministry of Labor established a working group to further study the problem. In 2001, a survey showed that an estimated 49,000 minors were involved in some type of economic activity, of which 28,000 were engaged in light work (less than 15 hours per week), 7,000 in regular work (15-35 hours per week), and 14,000 in dangerous work more than 35 hours per week. Of those engaged in light work, most (83 percent) were uncompensated family workers in the textile and shoe industries and agricultural sector in the North. Between 2000 and 2006, the majority of minors engaged in child labor were working in the civil construction (28 percent), hotel (18 percent), textile (13 percent), and food (11 percent) industries. The working group identified economic need as the primary cause of child labor, and recommended remedial measures to fight poverty and social exclusion.

14. Government Action: Since 1998 Portugal has effectively addressed child labor and forced labor through increased protection and intervention, according to Ines Pereira, advisor to the PIEC Research and Planning Team. The government, in partnership with civil society, undertook awareness-raising campaigns, increased labor inspections, engaged in social dialogue with employers' organizations, developed educational programs, provided subsidies to low-income families, and revised labor laws to better protect children against exploitation. According to Coordinator Matos, PIEC works closely with municipalities, district councils, local NGOs, ILO, and the National Commission for the Protection of Children and Youth, which coordinates intervention efforts through a nationwide network. The commission is fully funded by the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Justice. The Labor Ministry also funds and coordinates the Integrated Program for Education and Vocational Training (PIEF), which uses alternative educational methods to provide non-traditional schooling to child workers and at-risk children who are unable to stay in school. The program currently numbers 2,500 students, primarily boys aged 13 to 17. Established in 2009 to address current needs, PIEC has a broader mandate than its predecessor Program for the Prevention and Elimination of Exploitation of Child Labor (PETI)(2004-2009), which focused on preventing and combating child labor. PIEC identifies families with children at risk and helps children stay in school. It focuses on social inclusion and poverty alleviation, and works closely with the Labor Inspectorate (under the Authority for Labor Conditions), referring cases for inspection.

15. Concrete Results: Government efforts, in collaboration with civil society and the private sector, have resulted in near eradication of child labor. ILO/Portugal expert Amaral

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noted a dramatic decrease in the number of child workers and the number of children dropping out of school over the past ten years. She was not aware of any recent cases of exploitative child labor or forced labor, but did acknowledge "some residual cases" until 2008. PETI estimated that 13 children under the age of 16 were engaged in illicit child labor in 2006, compared with 126 minors in 2000. The Labor Ministry's Authority for Labor Conditions, which is responsible for investigating and responding to reports of illicit child labor, registered six cases in 2008 and four cases during the first six months of 2009.

16. New Form of Child Labor: An increasing number of children are working in the Portuguese entertainment industry. ILO/Portugal expert Amaral attributed this new phenomenon to the growing popularity of Portuguese musicals and soap operas, and pointed out that the Labor Code, which requires entertainment companies to obtain authorization from the National Commission for the Protection of Children and Youth, provides strict regulation. In 2009, the Labor Code was revised to simplify the lengthy, bureaucratic authorization process and to provide better protection against exploitation of child workers. In 2009, the Labor Code also revised the regulation on domicile work to clarify that child labor laws were also applicable to family members who assist independent contractors working at home for third parties.

17. CPLP Action Plan: In recent years, the Portuguese government, in collaboration with the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), has been developing initiatives to help other countries eradicate child labor. In May 2006, ILO/Portugal, the Ministry of Labor, and the Executive Secretariat of CPLP organized a conference on "Combating Exploitation of Child Labor in the Portuguese-Speaking World" in Lisbon to establish eradication of child labor as a priority, exchange ideas with ILO/Brazil and ILO/Geneva, and disseminate best practices. CPLP Ministers of Labor issued a joint declaration for a plan of action, which was presented at a CPLP-organized press conference in June. In September

2006 during a ministerial in Guinea-Bissau, they agreed on the need to eradicate child labor and adopted a plan of action for all CPLP countries to ratify ILO Convention 138 (minimum age of employment) and ILO Convention 182 (elimination of the worst forms of child labor) by 2010, and to eradicate the worst forms of child labor by 2016. (Portugal ratified ILO Convention 138 in 1998 and ILO Convention 182 in 2000.)

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